

Health Insurance Reform

DAILY MYTHBUSTER: Members of Media Repeat Myth About Public Health Insurance Option

This weekend, some members of the media repeated a myth opponents of health insurance reform have been spreading: that people would be “forced” to choose a public health insurance option, and falsely attributes it to the Congressional Budget Office. In fact, the public option in [America’s Affordable Health Choices Act](#) **simply provides those using the Health Insurance Exchange a CHOICE between various private plans and a public plan – with the choice being made by the individual and never an employer.**

Myth: “Rep. Tom Price, R-Ga., said the Democrats’ option would force individuals from their private plans to a government-run plan, a claim that the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office supports.” - Associated Press [8/16/09]

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“How can the Administration make the promise that if you like your insurance plan you can keep it, when CBO and other analysts estimate that some people will be switched from private to public?”- ABC’s Jake Tapper on This Week with Stephanopoulos [8/16/09]

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“...a study by the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office which found that by 2016, 9 million people will no longer have their employer-based plan under health care reform because businesses would decide in many cases that it’s cheaper simply to pay the penalty and push people into a public plan.” – Fox News’s Chris Wallace [8/16/09]

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□ *“Does he [the President] undermine his credibility when he makes some claims like, if you like your insurance you can keep your insurance, when a lot of people have said not really; employers could drop people from insurance if they wanted to move people into a public plan, if that existed?” – NBC’s David Gregory on Meet the Press [8/16/09]*

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Fact: The CBO does not support the assertion that individuals could be forced into the public option.□ Under the bill, no one can ever be forced onto the public plan.□ The only way someone would be in the public plan is the person’s own individual choice.□ All those using the Health Insurance Exchange will have a range of options – various private plans, and the public plan.□ If the employer is providing their employees health insurance through the Exchange, it is the employee – not the employer – choosing the plan.□ CBO estimates that about 30 million people will be using the exchange by 2019 and that about one-third of them – or 11 to 12 million people – would choose the public option.

In fact, the Congressional Budget Office directly contradicts Rep. Tom Price’s assertion -- specifically stating that Americans can choose the plan they’d like through the exchange:

• “Under the proposal, small employers could allow their workers to choose among the plans available in the exchanges—including the public plan ... Approximately 6 million people would obtain coverage in that way, with roughly a third choosing the public plan, so total enrollment in the public plan would equal about 11 million or 12 million, counting both individually purchased policies and employer-sponsored enrollees.” [\[CBO letter to Chairman Rangel, 7/14/09, p. 6\]](#)

Republicans have falsely claimed that a public health insurance option would undermine employer-sponsored insurance. However, the CBO numbers state that, under America's Affordable Health Choices Act, MORE people would receive coverage through their employer than under current law :

- CBO estimate for Americans with employer-sponsored health insurance in 2019:
 - o Under current law: 162 million
 - o Under America's Affordable Health Choices Act: 164 million [\[CBO letter to Chairman Rangel, 7/17/09, p. 6\]](#)